

Additional Notes on the Butterflies of the Island of Bute

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In 1990 I published a short paper on the butterflies of the Island of Bute (Gibson, 1990), and over the past ten years there have been some interesting changes, so it is hoped that these additional notes will keep our knowledge of Bute butterflies up-to-date. Needless to say, I shall be very grateful to receive any additional information on changes in status.

Systematic List

In the following Systematic List the arrangement and nomenclature follow Thomson (1980).

CLOUDED YELLOW *Colias crocea*

The Clouded Yellow has always been a rather uncommon migrant butterfly to Scotland, and Dr. George Thomson in his *Butterflies of Scotland* (1980) could only give a handful of records for the previous thirty years. In 1992, however, there was something of an invasion of the Clouded Yellow all over the West of Scotland and other parts of the country, with several specimens recorded from the Island of Bute (Gibson and Hopkins, 1996), the first records for the island. There have been several more records since then, but the experience of Mr. Angus C. Hannah in May this year was quite exceptional and is well worth placing on permanent record.

On 29th May 2000, a day of warm sunshine and cold north wind, Mr. Hannah was in a party of six BNHS members walking up Glen More from the farm and into the forest. Around midday, one of the party saw an unusual butterfly near the forest edge at NS 014711. The party proceeded north as far as NS 014723 before returning down the glen, and in the course of several hours noticed four further examples of what appeared to be the same species of butterfly. Finally, at about 5.00 p.m. at NS 023703 a specimen landed exhausted in a small puddle at Mr. Hannah's feet. Since it appeared to be drowning, Mr. Hannah assisted the butterfly to climb on to his finger and had ample opportunity to observe the butterfly in detail while it dried out. He carried it thus for some 200m until he reached a hawthorn bush in bloom, where the butterfly was persuaded to move from Mr. Hannah's finger on to a flower. Mr. Hannah has provided full identification details and there is no doubt that this specimen was a Clouded Yellow, as indeed were almost certainly all the other specimens.

On 11th July 2000 several specimens were seen by Rev. Peter Youngson on the eastern shore of St. Ninian's Bay (NS 042605), and others have been reported from different localities on Bute including Ascog and Ardscaipsie. All these later examples were deep yellow, unlike those in Glen More, which were pale coloured, presumably females, some of which can be quite pale.

All these sightings confirm that there is still a small migrant population on Bute.

BRIMSTONE *Gonepteryx rhamni*

[The Brimstone is an extremely rare butterfly in Scotland, but at the time of going to press a possible, as yet unconfirmed, occurrence has just been reported, which if correct would be the first record for Bute. This will be fully investigated as soon as the required information is forthcoming, and in the meantime it is noted here only as a possible record. If substantiated, full details will be published in due course.]

LARGE WHITE *Pieris brassicae*

In my experience, a most significant decrease, particularly during the past five years, so that the Large White has become distinctly uncommon; during 1997 and 1998 I did not see a single specimen. Further information would be welcome.

GREEN-VEINED WHITE *Pieris napi*

In my previous butterfly paper I reported that this species had undergone "a distinct reduction in numbers during the past ten years or so". This decrease in population has apparently continued, so that the Green-veined White is now comparatively scarce compared to the Small White. This is surprising, and a similar decrease in population does not seem to have been reported on the neighbouring mainland.

ORANGE TIP *Anthocharis cardamines*

Within recent years the Orange Tip butterfly, formerly a fairly uncommon species in the West of Scotland, has been recorded with increasing frequency from lowland Clyde, particularly in Renfrewshire and Ayrshire. Until 1997 I had not personally found it in Highland Clyde or on any of the Clyde islands, but during the last two weeks of May 1997 I recorded four single specimens from three areas, widely separated, near Kilchattan Bay and Ardsclapsie on the Island of Bute (Gibson, 1997); these were new records for the island. Several specimens have been seen since then, so a small population has apparently become established, and information about any additional records will be gratefully received.

PEACOCK *Inachis io*

The Peacock can certainly be very variable in its population, but 1997 appeared to be a particularly good year, with considerable numbers recorded from many different parts of the island.

References

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